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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, June 17, 2011

Media Alert

King Mohammed VI Sends Landmark Constitutional Changes to Moroccan People for a Vote

Washington DC (June 17)—In an address to the people of Morocco this evening, His Majesty King Mohammed VI outlined bold Constitutional amendments that establish the Moroccan Kingdom as a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary system with sovereignty vested in the people. The reforms strengthen Morocco's governing institutions—in particular a Prime Minister as Head of Government, Parliament, and an independent Judiciary. In keeping with King Mohammed VI's promise, the people of Morocco will "have the final say" in a national referendum set for July 1.

Highlights of the new Constitutional amendments and initiatives:

- Changes will bring about a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government with sovereignty vested in the people.
- The Head of Government will be a Prime Minister appointed from the party that wins the general election, with the power to propose and dismiss cabinet members, and propose senior government officials and Ambassadors.
- It will establish an independent Judiciary, and guarantee freedom from illegal searches or detention, privacy for communications, and the right to trial and a lawyer for anyone arrested by the authorities.
- A robust regionalization initiative will transfers power from central government authorities to elected local and regional officials directly accountable to citizens.
- Equality of all citizens regardless of sex, origin, language, religion, or creed is guaranteed.
- Amazigh, for the first time, will be recognized as an official language following Arabic, the traditional official language.
- Institutions will be strengthened to promote good governance, human rights, and protection of freedoms.
- Mechanisms to ensure oversight and accountability in the exercise of power in public office will be established.
- The national referendum to approve the amendments will be held on July 1st.

These latest reforms build on Morocco's efforts over the past two decades to empower people politically, socially, and economically—through holding free and fair elections, building a vibrant civil society, improving women's rights, raising living standards, and safeguarding human rights.

For the Full Text of His Majesty King Mohammed VI's June 17th speech, go to:
http://www.map.ma/eng/sections/main1/hm_the_king_adresse/view

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The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

OPINION

Bahrain Could Learn From Morocco's Model

The king is proposing major democratic reforms without a shot being fired

By **AHMED CHARAI**

Amid uncertainty in Tunisia and Egypt, and a brutal dictator's war against his people in Libya, a phenomenon emerged last week in Morocco that might offer a new kind of hope for the region. Some locals have dubbed it the King's Revolution, and neighboring countries and Western policy makers would do well to examine its implications.

On March 9, the 47-year-old ruler, Mohammed VI, appeared on national television flanked by his brother and son. He tasked a group of esteemed Moroccans—including a former dissident who has bitterly fought the monarchy—to draft a new constitution that would cede roughly half the king's authority to an elected prime minister.

He called for a separation of powers, including an independent judiciary, a more even distribution of governance across the country's provinces, and a series of amendments that would enshrine individual liberties, human rights and gender equality. And in a nod to the region's indigenous inhabitants, the Berber, who make up 40% of the population, he called for their mother tongue of Amazigh to become an official language alongside Arabic.

Observers of this sweeping proposal, which essentially calls for transforming the current political system into a European-style constitutional monarchy, may be inclined to doubt its sincerity. The Middle East and North Africa are full of constitutions that promise freedom and justice but amount to nothing but empty promises. (The murderous dictatorship in Syria boasts one such document.) Factor in the current political climate—tyrant-toppling mass demonstrations across the region—and you might reasonably accuse the king of pandering to a restive population. Morocco has indeed witnessed demonstrations of its own in recent weeks, though most protestors called for systemic reform, not the king's ouster.

Yet Morocco and the likes of Syria have always been worlds apart—and now the gap is widening even further. This is a kingdom that has been bucking the worst regional trends for more than 70 years.

During World War II, when pro-Nazi riots killed hundreds of Jews in Baghdad, the grandfather of the present Moroccan king was shielding his own Jewish subjects from the Nuremberg-like laws of the French Vichy who occupied his country. Where bloody republican coups followed the withdrawal of European empires in Algeria, Syria and Iraq, Moroccan nationalism was comparatively peaceful, stable and conciliatory toward the country's former French rulers—a policy that paid off culturally and economically in the decades that followed.

Dissidents were brutalized under the late Hassan II, to be sure, though that monarch's pro-American, anti-Soviet foreign policy was among the most constructive in the region. But his son, who now rules, took pains to address the former king's injustices by establishing the only truth and reconciliation commission in the history of the Muslim world in January 2004. Though it fell short of its South African equivalent, the commission did deliver official acknowledgment of the prior regime's brutality and compensated its victims.

Now the king is offering to voluntarily democratize his country. This proposal is part of a series of constructive reforms that the monarchy has undertaken over time, in no small part due to engagement between the king and the parties that oppose him in parliament. Open calls for a parliamentary monarchy have been expressed resoundingly since 2008 by the opposition Socialist Union of Popular Forces. The youth demonstrations that have recently engulfed the region have given this demand even greater urgency.

If the king makes good on his pledge, an authoritarian Arab country will have embraced democratizing trends without a shot fired and without a drop of blood shed. The question is whether the King's

Revolution might provide lessons for other monarchs in the neighborhood. In some of the other monarchies where demonstrations have broken out—Bahrain, Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia—it will be natural for protesters to make similar demands of their own kings. Those kings will find it hard, though not impossible, to deliver.

Bahrain's monarch has the centuries-long claim to legitimacy but lacks the religious legitimacy of the Moroccan monarch, being a Sunni in charge of a country with a Shiite majority. Nor is the Saudi king quite free to loosen his grip: His claims to legitimacy in a highly religious state rest on the support of an extremist clerical elite for whom Western-style democratic reforms are highly suspect. In Jordan and Oman, the monarchies are very young.

But in all of these countries, the kings wield enormous power and have the capacity to introduce meaningful reform. In the long run, they may have no choice but to draw lessons from the Moroccan model.

Mr. Charai is publisher of the weekly Moroccan Newspaper L'Observateur and the French edition of Foreign Policy magazine.

Washington Post

Sunday, March 13, 2011 Posted at 9:03 AM ET

Right Turn

Two choices in the Middle East: Libya and Morocco

By Jennifer Rubin

You'd be hard pressed to find a greater contrast last week in the Middle East than Libya and Morocco. While the bloodbath continued in Libya, Morocco was a completely different story. Libyans were fighting for their lives; Moroccans were listening to an unusual speech:

Morocco's King Mohammed VI promised sweeping constitutional reforms, including real powers for a popularly elected prime minister instead of a royal appointee, as well as a free judiciary.

In his first speech after uprisings across the Arab world and less than a month after protests erupted in Morocco for more social justice and limits on royal powers, the king Wednesday pledged to draw up a new draft constitution.

"We have decided to undertake a comprehensive constitutional reform," King Mohammed said, underlining his "firm commitment to giving a strong impetus to the dynamic and deep reforms... taking place."

He outlined seven major steps, including the way the prime minister is chosen.

Libya is convulsed in a war that will, absent decisive action by the West, go on for some time. Meanwhile, Morocco will be having a national debate:

The Moroccan monarch announced the formation of a commission to work on the constitutional revisions, with proposals to be made to him by June. A referendum will then be held, he said, without giving a date.

The live broadcast was the first time the king has delivered an address to the nation since thousands of people demonstrated in several cities on Feb. 20 demanding political reform and limits on his powers.

They were the first protests in the country since the start of the uprisings across the Arab world that toppled the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt this year.

There have been other peaceful rallies since then, including in the capital, Rabat, and the country's biggest city, Casablanca, with young activists campaigning for greater democracy using the Facebook social network to call for new demonstrations on March 20.

To put it simply, this is a big deal in Morocco. In the first protest Feb. 20, Moroccans took to the streets to demand more accountability and constitutional reform. Much of their anger was directed at the parliament and the political parties. The king, instead of cracking down, decided to speed up a process of decentralization and deconcentration of power. The idea is to move power and authority out of Rabat and devolve it to local elected bodies.

That will entail monumental challenges for a country where local figures have not had responsibility for governance. The opportunity for graft is real and significant. To say there will be a steep learning curve would be a vast understatement.

The speech was praised by France and Spain. The United Nations, and then, belatedly, the Obama administration added their commendations. The message was delivered by a State Department spokesman, rather than the secretary of state. Obama was characteristically silent. Last year, however, Hillary Clinton did praise Morocco as a "model to follow." Unfortunately, it is not a model she personally cared to tout last week.

Lawmakers, by contrast, were boisterous in their praise. Sen. John McCain issued a statement:

"I commend His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco for the plan of constitutional and democratic reform that he laid out in his impressive speech yesterday. This new reform agenda builds on the King's long-standing commitment to lead Morocco to a future of reform and modernization, and it could ensure that the Kingdom of Morocco will continue to stand as a positive example to governments across the Middle East and North Africa. I support the aspirations of the Moroccan people for greater democracy, economic opportunity, and rule of law. In the weeks and months ahead, the United States must be vigilant and tireless in our support for the government and people of Morocco in transforming the King's vision of reform into a reality that improves the lives of all Moroccans. The United States deeply values our strategic partnership with Morocco, and that partnership will only grow deeper and better as it increasingly comes to rest on shared values as well as common goals."

Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) and House Foreign Affairs Committee chairwoman Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) were also effusive.

So why is Morocco's political ethos so different from its neighbors? Talking with talking with diplomats, Moroccan officials and Middle East experts yields a general consensus: the Moroccan monarchy. For centuries the monarchy has been a symbol of unity in a country with a variety of languages and substantial regional differences. Moreover, as the highest religious authority in the country as well as its ruler, the Moroccan monarchy enjoys a legitimacy and respect that Moammar Gaddafi, Hosni Mubarak and Ben Ali could only dream of.

But it is also true that this particular king has been on a reform path for 20 years. He championed a new family code that granted rights to woman unprecedented in Muslim countries in the region. He has also promoted efforts at economic diversification and a "human development initiative" that has been building infrastructure at a furious pace. (A group of journalists who returned from a recent trip describe a country that looks like one giant construction site.) That program focuses on the 600 of the most disadvantaged communities and seeks to make regional capitals (e.g., Marrakesh, Tangiers) more attractive and livable, with modernized roads, medical facilities, and schools as well as new roads, and water and sanitation systems. All of that, the Moroccan government hopes, will prevent Casablanca from becoming a

megalopolis like Mexico City or Buenos Aires. The most visible sign of success is the disappearance of squalid shanty towns in many areas, especially in the south.

What can the United States and, more important, Morocco's neighbors, learn from the king's approach? For the United States, this should be a reminder that Morocco is an ally that America can and should work with. To the extent Obama has adopted the "Freedom Agenda" as his own, he'd be wise to provide financial, political and technical assistance as Morocco embarks on a challenging process of reform. Aside from money, the conversion to a more democratic system of local rule will require training in everything from urban planning to accounting for hundreds of local officials. As for Congress, this probably isn't the time to *decrease* aid to the one uber-stable Muslim country in the region.

But most critically, Morocco can serve as an example to others in the region that the best defense against both Islamic radicals and secular revolutions is a modernizing country that provides young people with the opportunity for economic success and political freedom. Those not yet enveloped in the flames of revolution should think hard about the Moroccan example.

<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/161459-mercenaries-in-libya-gadhafis-hired-terrorists>



Monday, May 16, 2011

THE HILL'S
Congress Blog
Where lawmakers come to blog

Mercenaries in Libya: Gadhafi's hired terrorists

By Edward M. Gabriel

Two weeks have passed since U.S. military forces tracked down Osama bin Laden and finally brought him to justice, a decade after 9/11.

But while bin Laden is dead, the hate and violence he preached clearly isn't. The deadly bombing in Morocco — which killed 17 and has been linked to an al Qaeda loyalist — is the most recent evidence of this.

In Libya, terrorism has a different, yet disturbing face, where hired mercenaries are terrorizing the Libyan opposition. Senior NATO officials have received information that Moammar Gadhafi is spending millions to hire mercenaries from the Polisario Front in Algeria and elsewhere to help fight the U.N.-backed coalition and quash Libyans who oppose his dictatorial regime. Credible sources report that hundreds of Polisario mercenaries are being paid \$10,000 each by Gadhafi to cross Algeria into Libya to fight NATO-led forces and kill Libyan protesters and rebels.

In other words, the Polisario Front, which touts itself as a human rights champion and gets millions in humanitarian aid from the U.S. and Europe through the United Nations, is letting its members take up arms against U.S.-allied NATO forces, in defiance of the U.N. Security Council mandate, and join Gadhafi's military campaign against the people of Libya.

As a former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco and someone who has followed the Middle East and North Africa closely for more than three decades, I find it outrageous that the Polisario Front continues to enjoy a civil reception in the official corridors of the U.S. administration and Congress, even while many of its members are engaged in a deadly shooting war against NATO forces in Libya.

And Algeria, which was one of only two Arab League nations to vote against a U.N. no-fly zone in Libya, is duplicitous in opposing U.N.-sanctioned military action against Libya while providing materiel to support Gadhafi's forces. After capturing 15 Algerian mercenaries last month, Libyan rebel leaders charged Algeria with backing Gadhafi and "turning a blind eye" to mercenaries crossing into Libya. More recently, Libyan opposition leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil — who met with senior Obama administration officials in the White House Friday — charged that Algerian planes have been used to fly mercenaries to fight Libyan rebels. And the Africa News Agency in London now reports that 500 combat-equipped light trucks have been sent to Libya from Algeria.

If the details about mercenaries received by NATO officials are accurate, both the leadership of the Polisario and Algerian authorities stand complicit in Gadhafi's efforts to reinforce his mercenary army. It is inconceivable that hundreds of Polisario mercenaries could be hired in the first place, or travel more than 1,000 miles from the isolated, Polisario-run camps in southwestern Algeria, without the tacit, if not explicit, support of Polisario and Algerian leaders.

Recent reports from press and policy experts have linked Polisario members to al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Latin American drug cartels, and other criminal groups operating in the Sahel region in Africa. Terrorist bands in these lawless expanses have kidnapped and killed foreign nationals, and engaged in illegal trafficking of drugs, arms, people and humanitarian relief supplies.

This is unacceptable. These charges of mercenary and criminal activity in Libya must be fully examined and investigated, and the U.S. government must hold the Polisario Front and Algeria accountable for their actions and complicity. Rather than welcome them into the halls of Congress and the U.S. administration, and let them exploit our generous aid dollars, those who dare to take up arms against the U.S. and its NATO allies should face very serious consequences.

Edward M. Gabriel served as US Ambassador to Morocco from 1997 to 2001, and currently advises the government of Morocco.

ON FILE: Background information on Moroccan Constitutional Reforms prepared by the Moroccan American Center for Policy

Commend the Kingdom of Morocco for Recent Constitutional Reforms

From: The Honorable Steve Cohen

Sent By: william.connor@mail.house.gov

Date: 7/26/2011

Commend the Kingdom of Morocco for Recent Constitutional Reforms

Dear Colleague:

On July 1, 2011, the Kingdom of Morocco successfully added a referendum to their constitution, moving the country towards being a more responsive and accessible constitutional monarchy. The social and political reforms that this referendum addresses represent significant progress toward achieving an efficient representative government and serves the citizens of the Kingdom of Morocco in a more democratic and humanitarian manner.

This new referendum allows the kingdom to choose a Prime Minister and appoint government ministers from the majority party, ensuring that the people are represented at all levels. In addition, the creation of the National Council of Human Rights (CNDH) brings forth new liberties which include gender equality, rights for children and young people, rights for vulnerable groups and the oversight and coordination of a national plan to promote human rights. These amendments to the government's structure and the establishment of CNDH represent a considerable step toward meeting the political desires and social freedoms of the Moroccan citizens.

Please join me in commending the Kingdom of Morocco for their recent constitutional reforms by signing onto a letter to His Majesty King Mohammed VI. As members of Congress, we should support a country's desire to move toward a more balanced governmental system that will help serve the many different needs of its citizens. To sign onto the letter, please contact William Connor in my office at 5-3265 or william.connor@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Steve Cohen

Member of Congress

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Your Majesty King Mohammed VI:

We as Members of the United States Congress would like to commend you for the recent initiatives you have undertaken to transition the Kingdom of Morocco toward a more responsive and accessible constitutional monarchy. We would like to recognize the success of the July 1, 2011 referendum to Morocco's constitution as a more democratic and humanitarian way to serve the citizens of the Kingdom of Morocco. The social and political reforms that this referendum addresses represent significant progress toward achieving an efficient representative government.

We welcome the progress that these new constitutional reforms will bring to the Kingdom of Morocco. Choosing a Prime Minister and appointing government ministers from the majority party will ensure that the people are represented at all levels. We applaud the new liberties brought forth by the new National Council of Human Rights (CNDH) which include gender equality, the rights of children and young people, the rights of vulnerable groups and the oversight and coordination of a national plan to promote human rights. We hope that these amendments to your government structure and the establishment of CNDH as well as the Mediator and the Economic and Social Council will further aid in providing all Moroccans the resources they deserve. This referendum represents a considerable step toward meeting the political desires and social freedoms of your citizens.

We believe that this referendum stands as an important milestone and hope that these new changes will remain in effect. We encourage you to continue moving toward a more balanced governmental system that will help serve the many different needs of the citizens of the Kingdom of Morocco. We are pleased to continue to support the expansion of your developing constitutional monarchy.

Sincerely,

Member & Staff Briefing with Ambassador Chris Ross, UN Special Envoy to Western Sahara - September 15, 2010

From: The Honorable Vic Snyder

Sent By: katie.hargis@mail.house.gov

Date: 9/9/2010

Please Join Congressman Vic Snyder for a Members' Briefing
with

Ambassador Chris Ross, UN Special Envoy to Western Sahara

Ambassador Ross, former US Ambassador to Algeria and Syria and special adviser for the Middle East and North Africa at the US mission to the United Nations, was appointed to be the new UN envoy to Western Sahara in January 2009. Ambassador Ross will discuss the current state of negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario, and how the United States Congress can help move the process along. This timely briefing comes as Ross prepares for the UN General Assembly where he will be working closely with the US, Britain, France, Spain, and Russia (also known as the "Group of Friends") to ask for their assistance in encouraging the parties to resume negotiations and reengage in confidence building measures.

Date: Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Time: 1:30 to 3:00

Location: 2212 Rayburn House Office Building

Staff are encouraged to attend as well. If you have any questions, please contact Katie Hargis katie.hargis@mail.house.gov

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